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HD **Macron taps Trump in his mission to make France great again; By inviting the U.S. President to attend Friday's Bastille Day parade in Paris, the French President again casts himself as the planet's new indispensable interlocutor**

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Donald Trump and Emmanuel Macron might look to have nothing in common save the limitless confidence each seems to possess in his own abilities. But the French and U.S. presidents do, in fact, share something else – an obvious love of power and its gold-plated trappings.

No sooner had Mr. Macron been elected in May than he hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin at Versailles, once the official residence of kings, to mark the 300th anniversary of Peter the Great's visit to the French court and the establishment of Franco-Russian diplomatic ties. It was an early indication that the new French leader sees himself not as a mere G7 head of state, but as a transformational figure with a historic mission to make France matter again.

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By inviting the U.S. President to attend Friday's Bastille Day parade in Paris, Mr. Macron again cast himself as the planet's new indispensable interlocutor, the key to cracking the great conundrums of our times, from climate change to Syria.

Mr. Trump might not be capable of entertaining such grandiose notions of his own place in history, but he does love a good parade, especially if he's in it. Mr. Macron, who risked some criticism at home for inviting a U.S. President the French widely despise, could not have picked a better way to butter up Mr. Trump than to treat him like the king he thinks he is.

So what if Bastille Day is supposed to be a reminder of why France rejected the monarchy in the first place. The event is nothing if not a glorification of the French state and military, with the President as the focal point of it all. Mr. Trump, who reportedly sought to include the military in his own inaugural parade, loved every second of it. Especially since, this year, American soldiers had been invited to march alongside their French counterparts to mark the 100th anniversary of the U.S. entry into the First World War.

Mr. Trump, who openly favoured far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen in her runoff election against Mr. Macron, has suddenly found a new BFF. Whether the affection is mutual is debatable, but French academics and pundits alike agree that Mr. Macron possesses truly unique powers of seduction that he has cunningly deployed all his life to get what he wants.

What does he want from Mr. Trump? Getting the U.S. President to reverse his pledge to pull out of the Paris climate accord might be asking for too much. But Mr. Macron at least wants to ensure that Mr.

Trump does nothing more to sabotage his efforts to co-ordinate global climate action. And make no mistake, the French President wants to be seen at home and abroad as determined to save the planet.

Mr. Macron also wants to be seen as the only leader on speaking terms with both Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin who can reconcile U.S. and Russian objectives in Syria. It's as much a domestic as foreign policy imperative for him. French voters will judge Mr. Macron as much by how he deals with the terrorist threat facing his country as by the success of his economic policies.

Mr. Macron also wants to save the European Union, and fancies himself a more effective EU advocate than German Chancellor Angela Merkel. He wants Mr. Trump, with whom Ms. Merkel cannot stand to be in the same room, to lay off encouraging the nationalists seeking to break up the EU.

Mr. Trump seemed to so enjoy getting out of swampy Washington, where his presidency is embroiled in one scandal and legislative failure after another, that the French trip looked more like a mini-vacation for the embattled U.S. President than an official visit. Paris offered him the glamour he loves, and which is unavailable to him back home, where his fans wear Make America Great Again hats rather than the haute couture of his French hosts. It was not so long ago that Mr. Trump complained that terrorism had made Paris a no-go zone. Now he can't wait to go back.

One can only imagine what was running through Mr. Macron's head as Mr. Trump complimented the French first lady for being "in such good shape." But if flattering Mr. Trump is the prix à payer for getting what he wants out of him, one senses Mr. Macron considers it a bargain.

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